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The broad range of changes during high school years is the focus of Youth in Transition, a longitudinal study of over 2,000 boys which began during their tenth-grade year. Open-end interview questions asked in 1966 were repeated 18 months later during the second of three rounds of data collection. The boys were asked to tell the major problems in their lives. The results, reported here as a by-product of the total study, revealed a striking increase in worry about the Vietnam war and the draft. Compared to 1966, 317 more boys named these as main problems worried about. It is not known if this reflects the increased proximity to military service or increased national concern focused on the war in Vietnam. (NS)

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Changes in Young Men's Attitudes toward Military Service: Fall 1966 to Spring 1968

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I am a bit surprised at finding myself reporting on young men's attitudes toward military service. Attitudes toward military service were not among the major research interests that prompted Robert Kahn and me to undertake what we've called the Youth in Transition project. We set out to study a broad range of changes that occur in adolescent boys during their high school years, and then relate these changes to important social environments--particularly school and work environments.

Much of our interest is focused on changes in boys along dimensions of "personality" or "mental health"--dimensions such as affective states, self-concepts, values and attitudes. We are also quite interested in the plans and behaviors of young men, particularly those relating to educational and occupational aspirations and achievements.

We did not, as I said, have any special interest in attitudes toward military service and related matters; consequently, we did not ask about them directly in our interviews and questionnaires. Nevertheless, these are indeed issues of great importance to many of the young men participating in our study; fortunately, one open-ended section of our interview gave them the opportunity to express some of their thoughts in this area. And that, in a nutshell, is how I happen to be reporting data on young men's attitudes toward military service.

The Youth in Transition study is a longitudinal one. It began with a nationwide sample of over two thousand tenth-grade boys who completed a sequence of personal interviews, tests, and questionnaires in the Fall of 1966. Eighty-five percent of the boys in that initial sample participated in a second round of interviews and questionnaires carried out in Spring of 1968, as

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most of them were nearing the end of eleventh grade. (At least one more round of data collection is planned for late 1969 or early 1970.)*

Since our project is focused on changes that occur during the high school years, most portions of our interview and questionnaire are repeated at each data collection. One such repeated measure is an interview segment designed to discover major sources of trouble or dissatisfaction. The respondent is first asked to tell about some of the things he feels pretty happy about these days. The interviewer tells him to "Try to include here everything that's important to you--your family, friends, school or other things you may be happy about or pleased with." After the respondent has answered this question--usually mentioning two or three sources of happiness--the interviewer asks a question dealing with sources of unhappiness. "Many people have told us about things they're not completely happy about. What are some things you're not too happy about these days?" It was at this point that some of the boys first took the opportunity to mention the draft and the war in Vietnam. In Fall 1966, when they were starting tenth grade, about eleven percent of our respondents mentioned these issues as things they were not very happy about.

A few questions later in the interview we approached the same general area of unhappiness in a manner designed to be a bit less personal and probing. "Now there's a more general question I'd like to ask. Can you tell me some of the problems young men your age worry about most?" If the respondent did not mention something clearly in the future, he was also asked: "What things do they worry about that might happen in the future?" And if the respondent did not originally mention something clearly in the present, he was asked: "What things do they worry about that are happening right now?" At Time 1 (Fall of 1966) there was little mention of the war and the draft until the specific question about "...things that might happen in the future." Then over a quarter of our respondents said that these things were a future worry to young men their age.

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The Time 2 data collection was carried out in Spring of 1968. On the basis of our earlier findings, we were quite eager to see whether the war and military service were more troublesome to our respondents, at the point when they

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*For a complete description of the Youth in Transition study, see Bachman, J. G., et al. Youth in transition: volume I -- Blueprint for a longitudinal study of adolescent boys. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, 1967.

were nearing the end of eleventh grade. The interviews were coded and processed using the same categories as were used at Time 1, thus permitting a fairly accurate contrasting of attitudes early in tenth grade with attitudes late in eleventh grade.

Table 1 presents responses at Times 1 and 2 to the question: "...What are some things you're <u>not</u> too happy about these days?" The table reproduces the major coding categories developed to classify responses to this open-ended question, and it also shows the detailed codes within the "Public Affairs" category. A summary picture of the data is presented in Figure 1. The figure shows a number of features clearly. First of all, things having to do with education lead all others as sources of unhappiness. But it is also clear that public affairs (separated into two columns in Figure 1) are a very prominent source of unhappiness. Looking now at the contrast between Time 1 and Time 2, we find that there is an increase in unhappiness in only two areas: public affairs, particularly the draft and the Vietnam war, and also jobs. These are certainly two areas likely to be increasingly on the minds of young men as they approach the final year of high school.

A more striking contrast between Times 1 and 2 appears in the answers to this question: "...Can you tell me some of the problems young men your age worry about most?" Figure 2 indicates that the draft and the Vietnam war are dramatically more important at Time 2 (38 percent) than at Time 1 (7 percent). The area of jobs also shows a sizeable increase in mentions (from 13 percent to 23 percent).

As we noted earlier, there were two more specific questions about things boys worry about. These questions, and the responses to them, are presented in Table 2. We saw earlier (in Figure 2) that the answers to Question 5 show a dramatic increase in mentions of the draft and the Vietnam war. In Questions 5a and 5b, however, the differences are not nearly so striking. When asked about future worries in Question 5a, 26 percent of the respondents mentioned the draft and the war at Time 1, while 32 percent mentioned these issues at Time 2. Question 5b dealt with things "...that are happening right now," and was asked in only a minority of cases where answers to earlier questions did not clearly refer to the present. The percentages of respondents mentioning the draft and the war as a source of worry right now were nine percent at Time 1, and ten percent at Time 2.

Table 1

Things Respondents Are Not Happy About

Q. 2. Many people have told us about things they're not completely happy about. What are some things you're <u>not</u> too happy about these days?

	PERCENT RESPONDENTS MENTIONING:							
	Time 1: Fall, 1966 (N=2514) Mentioned:				Time 2: Spring, 1968 (N=2164) Mentioned:			
	1st	2nd	3rd	Total	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, OR PROBLEMS	15	9	3	27	22	12	3	37
The draft; the Vietnam War	7.4	2.9	.8	11.1	13.7	4.9	.9	19.5
Opposition to war; anti-war factions	.3	.3	.1	.7	.3	.5	.1	.9
Other world situations; Communism; World Peace	1.7	1.1	.4	3.2	3.0	.8	.3	4.1
Space and science achievements; Other non-political world conditions	.1	.1	.1	.3	-	-	-	-
Inflation; prices going up	.2	.4	.2	.8	.1	.2	.1	.4
Civil rights; racial problems; protestors	2.1	1.9	.4	4.4	2.0	2.4	.5	4.9
Crime; poverty	.3	.5	.2	1.0	-	.3	.2	.5
Other national situations; patriotism; national leaders; vote	1.6	1.2	.5	3.3	2.5	2.3	.7	5.5
Local references	1.0	.9	.3	2.2	.5	.4	.3	1.2
EDUCATION	25	10	3	38	24	8	2	34
JOBS	2	1	-	3	4	3	1	8
ACTIVITIES AND POSSESSIONS	10	6	3	19	7	5	2	13
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS	17	9	2	28	13	7	3	23
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	4	2	1	7	4	2	1	7
OTHER PERSONAL PROBLEMS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS	5	2	1	8	3	2	1	6
MISCELLANEOUS	2	1	1	4	3	1	-	4
"NOTHING"	16	-	-	16	19	-	-	19
INAPPLICABLE; NO FURTHER MENTIONS; MISSING DATA	4	60	86		1	60	86	

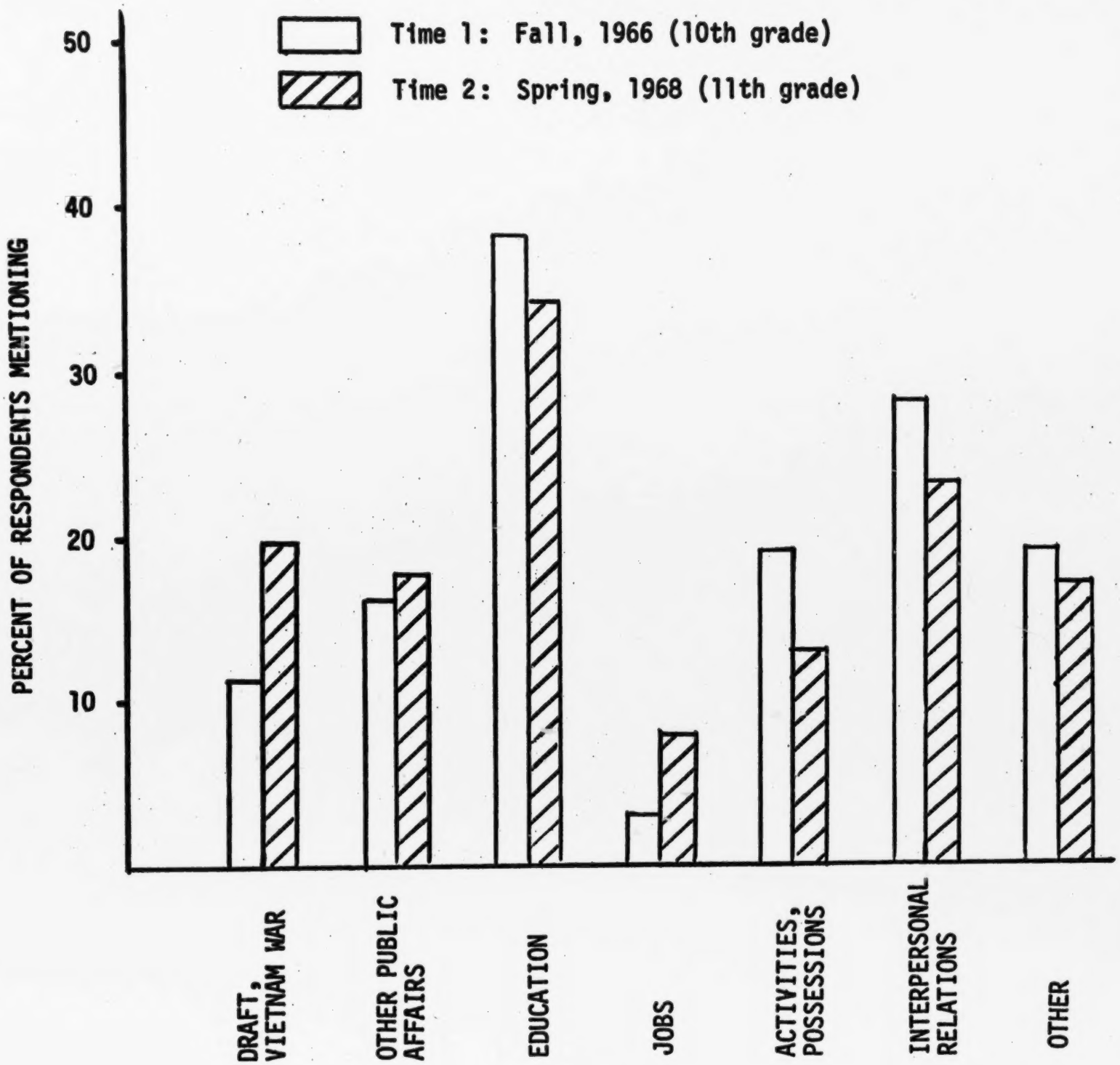

Figure 1. Answers to Question 2: "Many people have told us about things they're not completely happy about. What are some things you're not too happy about these days?"

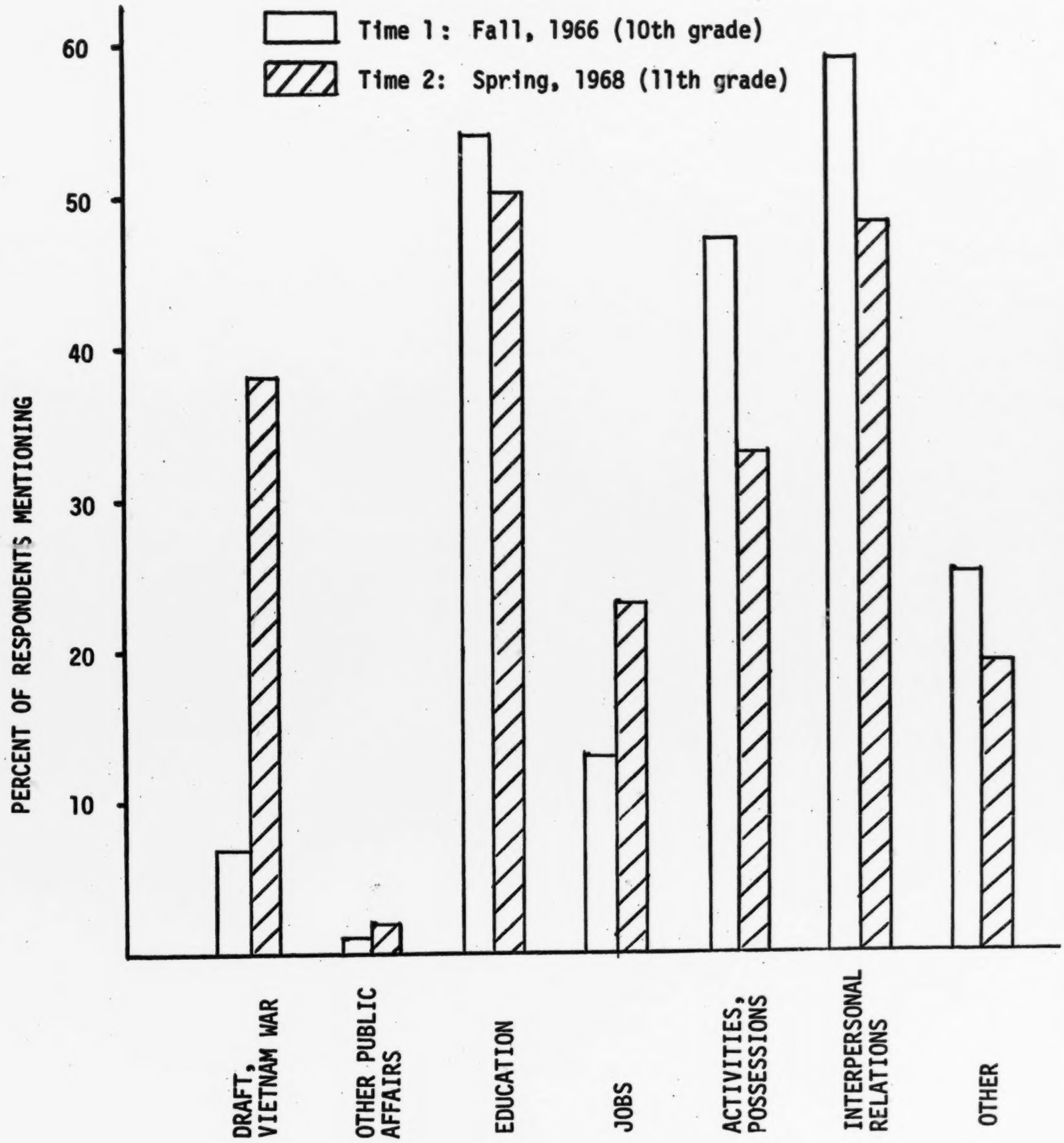

Figure 2. Answers to Question 5: "Now there's a more general question I'd like to ask. Can you tell me some of the problems young men your age worry about most?"

Table 2

Things Boys Worry About

Q. 5. Now there's a more general question I'd like to ask. Can you tell me some of the problems young men your age worry about most?

Q. 5a. (If NOT MENTIONED): What do they worry about that might happen in the future?

Q. 5b. (IF NOT MENTIONED): What things do they worry about that are happening right now?

	TOTAL PERCENT RESPONDENTS MENTIONING:[a]					
	Time 1: Fall, 1966 (N=2514)			Time 2: Spring, 1968 (N=2164)		
	Q5	Q5a	Q5b	Q5	Q5a	Q5b
PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, OR PROBLEMS	8	34	11	40	34	12
The draft; the Vietnam War .	7	26	9	38	32	10
EDUCATION	54	22	15	50	10	14
JOBS	13	21	1	23	12	1
ACTIVITIES AND POSSESSIONS . . .	47	4	4	33	3	2
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS	59	10	4	48	7	2
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	7	2	1	6	1	2
OTHER PERSONAL PROBLEMS OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS	15	5	-	7	2	1
MISCELLANEOUS	3	5	-	6	3	-
"NOTHING"	3	6	6	1	4	3

[a]Percentages were based on three mentions for Q5; two mentions for Q5a; and one mention for Q5b.

To summarize, at Time 1 when our respondents were starting tenth grade, they seldom mentioned the draft and the war until they were asked about future worries. But at Time 2 when they were near the end of eleventh grade, the war and the draft were mentioned much earlier in the sequence of questions by a large number of boys.

The data we've examined thus far contrast Time 1 and Time 2 using identical coding procedures. Prior to coding the Time 2 data, however, it seemed useful to us to add a special coding procedure to deal in greater detail with attitudes toward the Vietnam war and military service. This procedure called for an additional coding of any mention in the "Public Affairs" code category. There were a number of questions, including all those described here and several more, in which the respondent could have mentioned public affairs issues. Whenever the topic came up, no matter which question initially prompted it, the response was given the additional special coding.

The results of this special coding are seen in Table 3. At Time 2 there were about 72 percent of the respondents who mentioned something in the public affairs area as a source of unhappiness or worry. Five percent were concerned with general world situations; the rest were concerned with specific issues relating to the draft and/or the war. The percentages mentioning each issue may be read from Table 3, but a few bear special attention. A total of forty percent of our boys nearing the end of eleventh grade said that the draft system, or the prospect of being drafted, was a source of unhappiness or worry. An additional four and a half percent expressed specific concern about going to Vietnam to fight. Another twenty percent objected in a more general way to the war. In the aggregate, over two-thirds of our respondents mentioned one or more of these issues as a source of concern to themselves personally, and/or to young men their age.

These aggregate statistics are impressive, but they are somewhat abstract. Perhaps we should look at just a few illustrations of what our respondents actually said. One young man, when asked what he is not too happy about, said: "The war in Vietnam. Some of the thoughts people have on Vietnam are pretty bad. I don't go for kids eighteen and nineteen being shipped overseas right in the prime of life and say two out of eight don't come back. It's stupid." Another respondent said this about the strategy used in Vietnam: "I'm not happy with President Johnson because he's letting his politics run the war

TABLE 3

Special Coding of Attitudes Toward Vietnam War and Military Service

	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS MENTIONING AT TIME 2: SPRING 1968 (N = 2164)			
	1st Mention	2nd Mention	3rd Mention	Total
SOURCES OF HAPPINESS	2.8	0.3	0.2	
Approve draft; system	.1	-	-	.1
Being drafted	.4	-	-	.4
Going to Vietnam to fight	-	-	-	.1
The Vietnam War; the "issues"	.3	-	-	.4
Conduct of the war; the "strategy"	.1	-	-	.1
Opposition to the war; agree with anti-war factions	.2	-	-	.2
Idea of enlisting; military career	1.1	-	-	1.2
Other world situations (e.g., Communism, peace)	.2	.3	.1	.6
Other military matters	.3	-	.1	.4
SOURCES OF UNHAPPINESS OR WORRY	71.9	36.6	12.9	
Disapprove draft; system	18.6	8.9	2.7	30.3
Being drafted	21.8	11.1	3.1	36.0
Going to Vietnam to fight	4.5	3.6	1.7	9.8
The Vietnam war; the "issues"	20.0	9.5	3.9	33.5
Conduct of the war; the "strategy"	.7	.4	.3	1.4
Opposition to the war; disagree with anti-war factions	.7	.4	-	1.1
Idea of enlisting; military career	.6	.2	.1	.9
Other world situations (e.g., Communism, peace)	4.9	2.5	1.1	8.5
Other military matters	.1	-	-	.2
INAPPLICABLE; NO (FURTHER) MENTION OF MILITARY MATTERS	25.0	62.8	86.7	

when if we ran it like World War II we could end it in a few months. That's what makes me sick about that guy." A dropout, asked about sources of unhappiness, said: "One main big one is going to Vietnam. I quit school and joined the Army which I never should have done." One respondent summed up the worries of many when he mentioned: "The thought war will or may wreck my life. I can't really plan for the future."

As I said at the start, we did not set out in the Youth in Transition study to examine attitudes toward war and the military service. Instead, we left it for our respondents to tell us what were the major problems in their lives and the lives of other young men their age. What they have told us is that the draft and the war loom much larger now than they did eighteen months earlier. Whether this large shift in attitudes reflects primarily the increased proximity of military service for many of our respondents, or the increased national concern focused on the war in Vietnam, cannot be determined from these data alone. What <u>is</u> abundantly clear from our data is terribly important, if not surprising: young men nearing the end of high school have grave misgivings about the war and the prospect of their own military service.